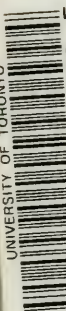


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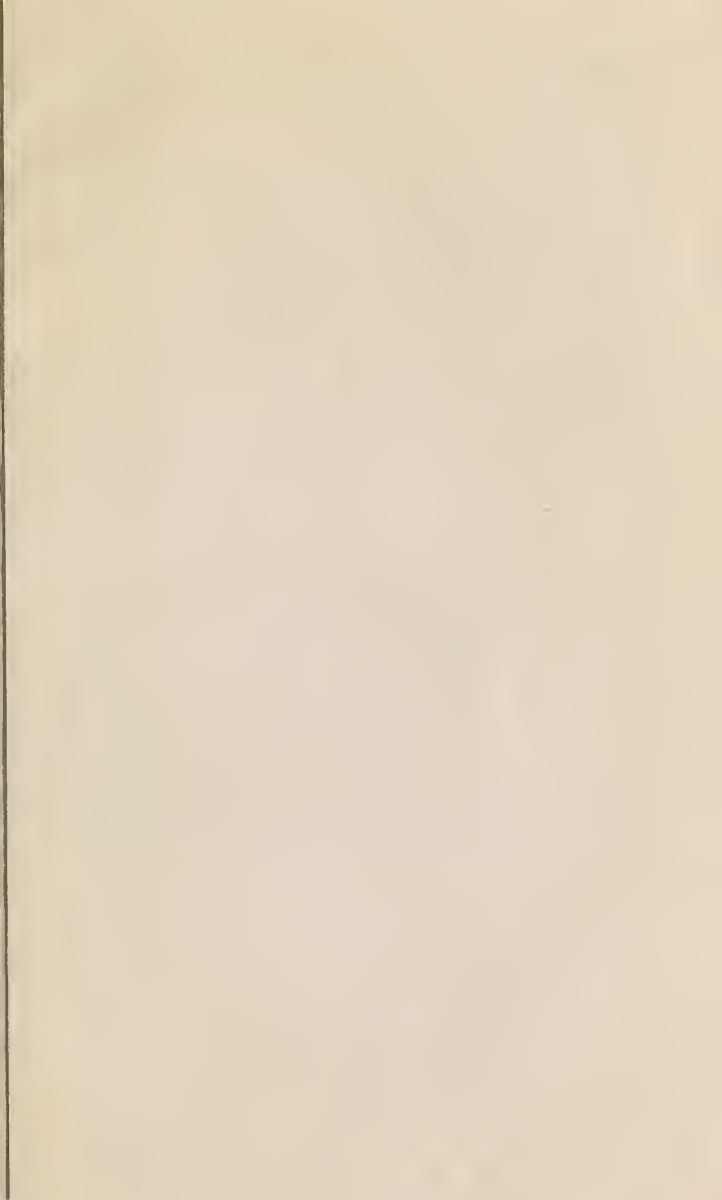
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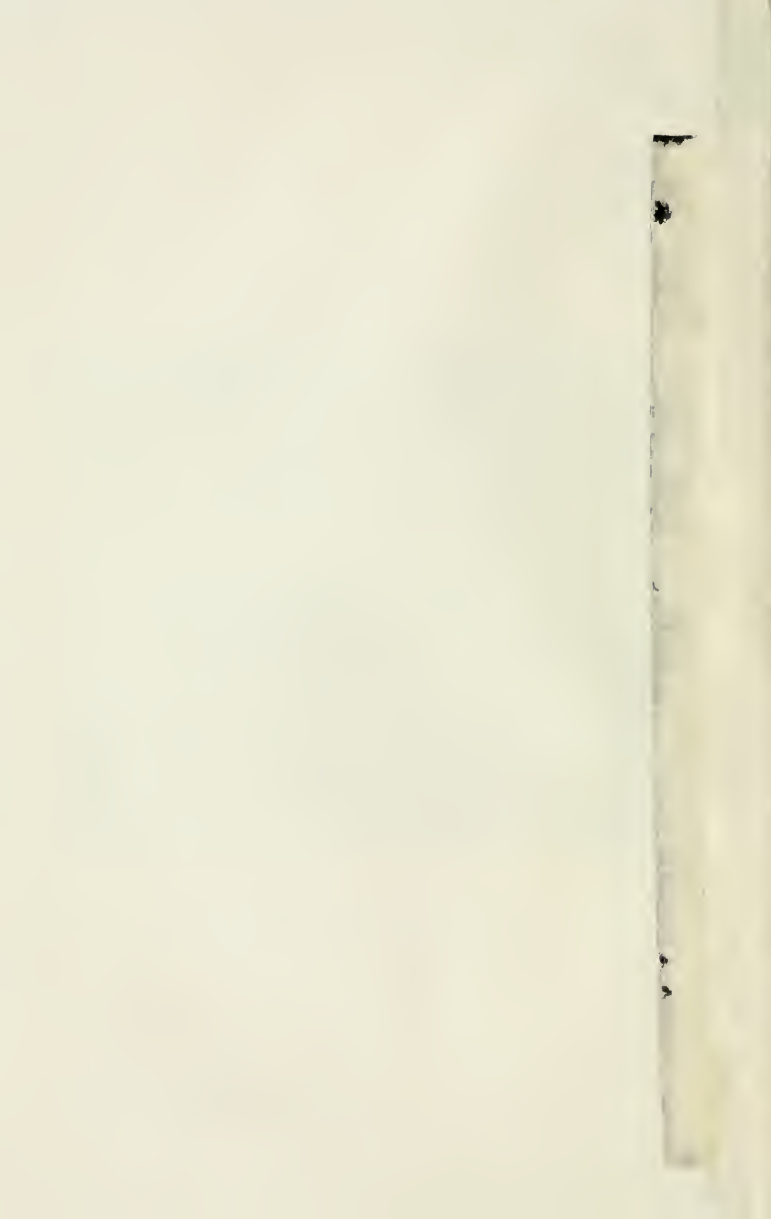




# An Introduction to Vedic Study (LECTURES)

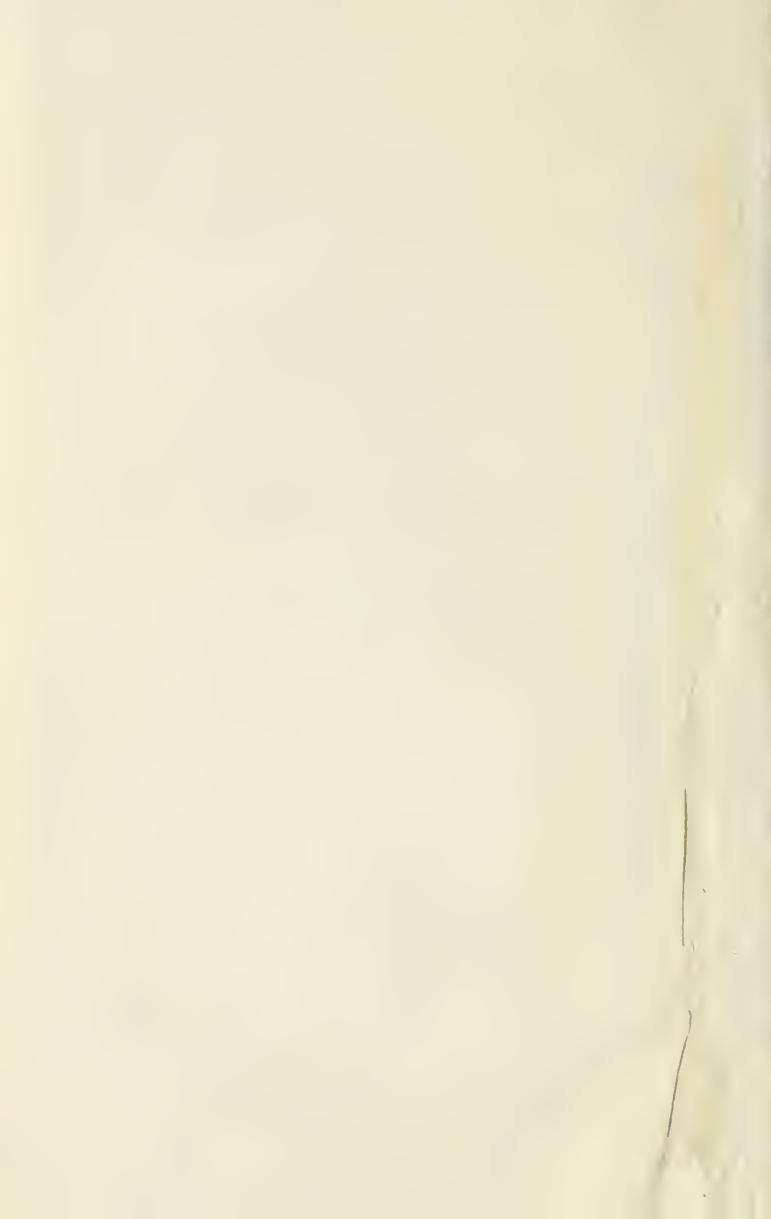


*Dr. Sampurnanand*









An Introduction

to

Vedic Study

(LECTURES)



*By*

*Dr. Sampurnanand*

*Published by :*

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# AN INTRODUCTION TO VEDIC STUDY.

## Publisher's Note.

His Highness the late Rajasaheb of Sangli donated about 14 acres land in Belgaum to Gurudeva Dr. R. D. Ranade. Gurudeva Ranade established this Trust under the name 'Academy of Comparative Philosophy & Religion' and got it duly registered as a Public Trust, he himself being the sole trustee, in 1952. However nothing could be done to develop the property in his life-time. After his demise in 1957, the District Court, Belgaum appointed five trustees in November 1962 and thereafter the whole land was levelled and plots were made. By the sale thereof, an appreciable amount was realised. The present Gurudeva Mandir was then constructed and it was inaugurated on 8th December 1965 by Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, the then President of India.

The trustees have been doing their best in spreading the gospel of **Paramārtha**, which was so very dear to Gurudeva Ranade. It is under the auspices of this Academy that the "Gurudeva Ranade Memorial Lectures" are being organised.

The Academy decided to invite Dr. Sampurnanand to deliver the first series of lectures, when he was the Governor of Rajasthan. He accepted the invitation in February 1967 and agreed to deliver his lectures on some branch of Vedic studies. He was to deliver the lectures in December 1967. Unfortunately, he could not visit Belgaum on account of his ill health. Ultimately, he expressed his inability to deliver the lectures on account of his continued ill health. Thereafter, he sent the typescript to us for publication.

The lectures are now being published. Dr. B. R. Modak, M. A. Ph. D., Reader in Sanskrit, Karnatak University, Dharwar agreed to write an introduction and we are grateful to him for his beautiful introduction.

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## INTRODUCTION

The Vedas have been a source of inspiration to the Indians since times immemorial. Many savants have spent their whole lifetime studying the Vedic lore which may be said to be the bed-rock of our culture. Many attempts have been made by the scholars both eastern as well as western for a full understanding of the Vedas. They have tried to interpret the Vedic mantras by following certain scientific methods.

In his Nirukta, Yāska explained certain mantras of the R̥gveda by deriving etymologically the important words therein. He refers to other schools of interpretation existing in his times such as mythological, naturalistic etc. Sāyaṇa wrote a commentary which proved to be of great help to the later scholars in the field of Vedic exegesis. There are also other commentaries written by Skandaswāmi, Udgītha, Venkatamādhava and Mudgal.

Western scholars like Max Müller, Oldenberg, Grassmann, Roth, Ludwig and Geldner followed a critical and comparative method for understanding the Vedic texts. At present scholars like Paul Thieme and J. Gonda

are working on similar lines. In India Dayananda Sarasvati, Dr. Raghu Vira, V. S. Agrawal, H. D. Velankar and S. D. Satavalekar have rendered yeomen's service to the cause of Vedic interpretation and now a number of scholars like Vishwabandhu Shastri and R. N. Dandekar are following their foot-steps.

Shri. Aurobindo had altogether a different approach to the Vedas. He thinks that the Vedic gods are psychological and not material in their functions. In his Foreword to the **Hymns to the Mystic Fire** he writes ( p. iv. ) " This change was evidently due to a cultural development in those early peoples who became progressively more mentalised and less engrossed in physical life and they advanced in civilisation and needed to read into their religion and their deities finer and subtler aspects which would support their more highly mentalised concepts and interests and find for them a true spiritual being or some celestial figure as their support and sanction " .

Dr. Sampurnananda has, in the following lectures, laid emphasis on the importance of the Indian tradition for a proper understanding of the Vedas. He has suggested that though the western scholars have done admirable work



in respect of the Vedas, we have to be very careful in accepting their views as they are likely to be biased. He has referred to the exploded myth regarding the original home of the Vedic people being outside India and has also tried to trace the antiquity of the Vedas which may go back to 35000 years.

The Vedas are **apauruṣeya** in the sense that the **mantras** in them were 'revealed' to the Vedic seers. The **mantras** were inspired from deeper planes of consciousness and contained secret knowledge. The poets are therefore called **kavayaḥ satyaśrutāḥ** 'seers who are the hearers of the truth.' Dr. Sampurnananda points out to the view of Shri. Aurobindo that the Veda couches the secret doctrine of the Vedic mysticism which can be properly understood through the 'psychological' interpretation. The Vedas, which are not merely the poetry of the bygone age, contain a universal message. This message gives an expression to the Yogic experience of the Vedic seers and contains a secret meaning couched in symbolic language. The words therein have an esoteric significance which can be really understood by the initiated. To the ordinary man the Samhitās speak in terms of health, wealth, heroic progeny, victory and long life and to the spiritually evolved person they

symbolically indicate the mystic truth which was taught through the Upāṇiṣads. Symbology helps to solve many a riddle which scholars have not been able to understand and which they have often misinterpreted. The hymns addressed to the various powers in nature are symbolic of the Highest Reality in its diverse aspects. They teach, on the one hand, the religion of faith and forms to the seeker who is at the initial stage and, on the other, they teach the philosophy of sublime unity to the seeker who is advanced. It is needless to say that the Vedic seers who declared : यो अस्याध्यक्षः परमे व्योमन् त्सो अङ्ग वेद यदि वा न वेद ( the Lord of this [ world ], who is in the highest heaven, he knows [ the origin of the Universe ] or perhaps he too knows it not. — R̥gveda X. 29.7 ) and वेदाहमेतं पुरुषं महान्तम् आदित्यवर्णं तमसः परस्तात् ( I have known that great Puruṣa, bright like the sun and beyond darkness. — Vājasaneyā Saṁhita 31. 18. ), can by no stretch of imagination be called naive, barbarous, primitive shepherds.

Dr. Sampurnananda was to deliver these lectures in the Gurudeva Mandir, Belgaum; but due to his illness he could not undertake the journey. He was kind enough to send the typescript of his lectures which are now being published. Dr. Sampurnananda was a recognised scholar in various branches of Indology such as

Ancient Indian History, philosophy, sociology, astronomy and literature. His works like **Vrātyakāṇḍa of the Atharvaveda** and **Āryonkā Ādidesa** (Hindi) have earned him fame. He was one of the greatest scholars of his generation of politicians and has to his credit more than 30 books in Hindi. Dr. Sampurnananda passed away on the 10th of January 1969. It is regretted that he did not live to see the publication of his lectures.

Dr. Sampurnananda has, in this book, indicated the lines on which Vedic exegesis may proceed to be fruitful. The practical suggestions made by him regarding the study of the Vedas are worth consideration. There should be exchange of ideas between the Pāṭhaśālās and the Universities. The study of the Vedas should be augmented by the study of the Itihāsa and the Purāṇas. The Government and charitable institutions should come forward to help the scholars engaged in the study of the Vedas. It is hoped that this book will create interest and inspire the younger generation to take up the Vedic study.

— B. R. Modak

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## AN INTRODUCTION TO VEDIC STUDY

**SYNOPSIS****FIRST LECTURE**

1. Introduction.
2. Dependence on foreign sources for the interpretation of old Indian texts.
3. Credit due to Western scholars.
4. The so called Aryan Race, evidence for it.
5. The arctic home of the Aryans- Tilak's theory.
6. The date of the Vedas.
7. Naturalistic interpretation.
8. Some passages apparently not amenable to rational interpretation.
9. Absolute reliance on Sayana harmful.
10. Swami Dayanand Sarswati.
11. S'rî Aurobindo school.
12. My personal wanderings in this field.
13. Why Mantras considered important by later generations.
14. Upaniṣadas not an intellectual revolt against Samhitas.
15. Riddles and dark hints.

## SECOND LECTURE

1. Yogic interpretation, important methodology.
  2. Vasudeva Saran Agrawala and Symbolic language.
  3. Sri Aurobindo's scheme.
  4. True approach to Vedic exegesis.
  5. The word Vāk.
  6. The word Vāk as an example of key words needing interpretation.
- 

## ERRATA

Page	line	incorrect	correct
11	12	दघर्ष	दघर्ष
20	18	ब्रम्हा	ब्रह्मा
„	„	तत्तपो	तत्तपो
21	5	ब्रम्ह	ब्रह्म
32	16	„	„
„	„	शूद्राय	शूद्राय
41	20	शूद्रो	शूद्रो
46	15	कायदुघा	कायदुघा
52	12	ब्रम्हाणो	ब्रह्माणो
„	„	तदश्नाति पार्थिव	तस्याश्नाति कश्चन
56	12	तमोरन्यः बिप्पलं	तयोरन्यः पिप्पलं
„	„	अभिवाकशीति	अभिचाकशीति

# TABLE I

Summary of the results of the experiments on the effect of the concentration of the solution on the rate of the reaction.

The following table shows the results of the experiments on the effect of the concentration of the solution on the rate of the reaction. The rate of the reaction was measured by the volume of gas evolved per unit time.

## TABLE II

Concentration of solution	Volume of gas evolved (cc)	Time (min)	Rate (cc/min)
0.1M	10	10	1.0
0.2M	20	10	2.0
0.3M	30	10	3.0
0.4M	40	10	4.0
0.5M	50	10	5.0
0.6M	60	10	6.0
0.7M	70	10	7.0
0.8M	80	10	8.0
0.9M	90	10	9.0
1.0M	100	10	10.0
1.1M	110	10	11.0
1.2M	120	10	12.0
1.3M	130	10	13.0
1.4M	140	10	14.0
1.5M	150	10	15.0
1.6M	160	10	16.0
1.7M	170	10	17.0
1.8M	180	10	18.0
1.9M	190	10	19.0
2.0M	200	10	20.0

# FIRST LECTURE

## Introduction

It seems that I have landed myself in a somewhat embarrassing situation by undertaking to speak on the subject of Vedic Studies. I know also my limitations. I know also the limitations imposed by the fact that I have to confine myself to two lectures spreading over two hours. This, among other things, strictly defines my role. I can hardly say much that is positive I shall be amply satisfied if I can direct thinking along certain definite channels and succeed in pointing out how some of the directions along which our thoughts have been generally guided so far are leading us astray. But I have the advantage of speaking before an audience whose minds are oriented to scholarly research and critical thinking, connected as this institution which I have the privilege of addressing is connected with the name of a great scholar whose reputation is confined not only to this and neighbouring localities but spreads over northern India as well. I am sure, therefore, that those to whom I am speaking will find their minds attuned to the thoughts I am intending to place before them.

## Dependence on foreign sources

In this context I have in mind the average



educated Indian of today, namely, who has received his education mostly through the medium of English in one of our Universities. It is a tragedy that the Indian should have to look to foreign sources for any interpretation of his own scriptures. The Vedas constitute preeminently the scriptures of the Hindu. No other book can claim that privileged position and yet what a pity it is that we know the contents of the Vedas, to the extent that we know them at all, through the medium of English translations made by Englishmen. If one of us has any difficulty about the interpretation of a particular passage he will turn to foreign authorities or to the works of those Indians who have based themselves on such foreign authorities. He will not go to any Pandit of the old school and yet in this connection I am reminded of the advice given by Dr. Venis, Principal of the Queen's College and Sanskrit College, Banaras, in a lecture delivered by him under the auspices of the Allahabad University sometime in the year 1914-15. I can not quote the exact words but the substance of what he said was something like this: "If any one wants to have a real knowledge of Sanskrit and a real understanding of the meaning of Sanskrit texts he must go to the pandits of the old school. People like me can help you to obtain degrees but real



knowledge is still to be found with them alone." The reason for what Dr. Venis said is obvious. The old method of teaching was mostly by word of mouth. Knowledge came from teacher to pupil. Much of it was not to be found in books at all. This old school of Pandits is gradually disappearing. Many of its best representatives are gone and they have not been replaced. Only recently we read the news of the death of Mahamahopadhyaya pandit Girdhar Sharma Chaturvedi. The knowledge that these men possessed is disappearing with them, inspite of all the research, 'much of it no doubt valuable, that is being carried on today. As I said earlier, we do not go to these men to help us in solving our difficulties with the result that the doubtful and sometimes positively erroneous interpretations of our own texts are firmly and more firmly still stamped on our minds.

### **Credit due to Western Scholars**

Let me not be misunderstood. It is not my intention to suggest for a moment that the work done by European scholars is fit to be thrown into the waste paper basket or that they deliberately approached problems relating to old Indian culture with prejudiced minds. I have nothing but admiration for the work of some of these men and their devotion to the subjects

which they took up for study. They have thrown a flood of light on a number of dark corners and what is perhaps most important, stimulated many Indians to follow in their foot steps and take up these studies in right earnest.

But prejudice was not also entirely absent from the scene. This arose partly from the understandable desire of the human mind to reject whatever seemed to run counter to a pet theory adopted at a time when the available volume of evidence seemed to support it and there was the further fact of India being politically dependent upon a Western power. A nation politically dominated by another always suffers from an inferiority complex and others find it difficult to attach any great value to its culture and civilization.

### **The so-called Aryan Race**

Western scholars had assiduously built up the myth of an Indo-European Aryan Race mostly on the bases of certain linguistic features common to a number of languages spoken in the West as well as in India and Iran. I shall not take your time by discussing the subject at great length but it must be remembered that language by itself need not be a conclusive proof of a common origin. The Negro in the United States

knows no other language than English but no one could be bold enough to say that he is in any sense ethnically related to the White people in that country. Having once created this mythical Aryan Race whose significance was exploited to its true logical end by Hitler not so long ago, a search had naturally to be made for the common habitat. This was finally found in Central Asia. Indian evidence or want of evidence was simply ignored.

### **The Home of the Aryans**

No importance was attached to the fact that neither in the Rig Veda nor in any other repository of Indian tradition is there any reference to the Aryans having lived anywhere except in India. If the Aryans came to India from Central Asia they had managed, by the time of the Rig Veda, completely to forget this fact. Naturally Western scholars were not prepared to admit any interpretation which would run counter to this theory of the original Central Asian home. Tilak, as we know, entirely on the basis of the internal evidence of the Vedas has sought to prove that the Aryans at least at one time lived in the Arctic region. Avinashchandra Das has similarly supported the generally accepted view of the Indian Pandits that the Aryans knew no other home than India. In my own book "आर्यों का

आदि देश" I have supported the same opinion. Here is one point where one Western interpretation differs entirely from our own. For instance, there are words in the Vedas like Sagar, Samudra Sindhu which mean the sea. Now, as we know, there are no seas in Central Asia. Therefore, Western Scholars will naturally translate these words as meaning river or big river. If, on the other hand, we accept the Indian view that the original home of the people who have given us the Vedas was in India itself in the region known as Sapta Sindhu, the land through which, flowed the five rivers of the Punjab with the Sindhu to the West and the Saraswati to the East there is no difficulty at all because it is well known that the Sea in those days covered what is Rajasthan today as well as Uttar Pradesh and the land further East.

## **The Date of the Vedas**

A home having been allotted to the Aryans, a date had to be found for the time when they separated from that home in successive groups, going to the East and West. The men among whom all this thinking was going on were for all their devotion to scholarship, human beings and their minds were dominated by their early cultural training. According to the Bible, creation is hardly eight thousand years old and these

men, with a number of workers in other fields, had not been able to free themselves entirely of this belief. The antiquity of Egypt can not be denied because of the cross-references to it in the Bible, but no other country and no other people could put forward a similar claim. Roughly speaking European scholars came to the conclusion that the Rig Veda which comprises some of the oldest portions of the Vedas covers the period of 1200 to 1500 B. C. This period completely covers whatever is known about the progress of civilization among the people of Europe and easily provides a century or two for the Aryans to move from Central Asia to Eastern Europe, say Greece. The whole of the growth of Indian civilisation and culture had also perforce to be confined within these limits. The Vedas could not, therefore, be taken further back than 1500 B. C.

It may be said that very few Indians who have cared to give very serious thought to this question have been able to accept this bed of Procrustes to which the whole of Indian history in all its aspects is being compelled to accommodate itself.

Incidentally, I should like to point out that most scholars, Indian as well as foreign, find it convenient to restrict themselves to the Rig Veda when considering questions of this kind. While



all the Vedas are equally sacred to the Hindu the Rig Veda is believed to contain some of the oldest parts of vedic literature and is the fountain head of all that the Vedas stand for. It may well, therefore, be taken as an exemplar of the rest. I shall also follow this convention and unless I mention any other Veda by name, I may be taken to refer to the Rig Veda.

The Veda is not a collection of poems in the ordinary sense of the word. Every Mantra is associated with the name of a 'Ṛṣi' who, however, is not its author in the normal sense. A Ṛṣi is defined as Mantra Draṣṭā, a person who sees the Mantra and the whole body of Mantras is called Sṛti, that which has been heard, the theory being that the Truth which the Mantra expounds was revealed to the Ṛṣi in the state of tsamādhi. The words in which he clothes the idea may be his but the thought is not.

It is difficult, things being what they are, to arrive at any date from the internal evidence of the Rig Veda. There is, for instance, an important historical event described at great length, the Dāśa Rājāna war, or the war of the 10 kings but it was an entirely domestic affair of the Aryan people. No reference to this war is to be found in the legends of any other country or people. Thus no cross reference is possible and we can

not pinpoint the date of this war. I am not aware of any other material offered by the Veda for determining its approximate date but there are certain astronomical data which lead to certain results more or less bearing on this subject. Many friends here have probably read Lokamanya Tilak's two books on the Antiquity of the Vedas and the Arctic Home in the Vedas. From certain facts to which reference has been made in the Veda— and the well known words of the 10th Adhyaya of the Bhagavadgita

मासानां मार्गशीर्षोहम् ऋतुनां कुसुमाकर :

confirm this—Tilak came to the conclusion that there was a time in the life of the Aryan people when वसन्त ऋतु the spring season, fell at the time when the sun was in Mr̥gsiras Nakshatra (मृगशिरस् नक्षत्र). These days the sun is in Mr̥gshira in summer. This year, for instance, it enters this Nakshatra on the 7th of June. From astronomical calculations, it appears that the Mr̥gsiras Nakṣatra could have been associated with Spring about 10 thousand years ago. This would tend to show that there are references in the Rig Veda to a period going back to 10,000 years which is, of course, much further back than 1500 B. C. There are other astronomical references. I shall refer, for instance, to one more. This is very interesting. The 13th Mantra of the 85th Sukta of the 10th Mandal says :

सूर्याया वहतुः प्रागात्, सविता यमवासृजत् ।

अघासु हन्यन्ते गावो, अर्जुन्यो : पर्यूह्यते ॥

This means that the dowry which the sun gave at the marriage of his daughter Surya was put in a bullock cart. The cart began to move but when it reached the Maghā Nakṣatra the bullocks had to be beaten. When it came to the Arjunis, namely, the two Phalgunis the cart began to move briskly. This seems to be a meaningless jumble of words and no commentator, Indian or foreign, was able to extract any sense out of it. Some brilliant scholars of Maharashtra, however, have extracted the following meaning :

After moving forward for sometime with speed the cart was gradually getting slower and slower. The bullocks seemed to stop completely at Maghā. They had to be beaten to make them move. But as they reached Pūrvā Phalgunī, the movement became brisk again. The reference apparently is to the movement of the sun along the Zodiac. As the solstice approaches, the sun seems to get slower and slower till it finally seems to stop at the solsticial point. After that its movement becomes brisker. Now these days the winter solstice also falls on the 23rd of December, when the sun is in Mūla Nakṣatra, it was in Maghā on the 16th of August. According to calculations the solstice used to correspond



to the sun in Maghā about 35000 years ago. No one suggested that this particular Mantra is 35000 years old but if this interpretation of the Mantra is correct and no other alternate sensible interpretation is available, then there are memories in the Rig Veda of a period of 35000 years back from now.

Apart from these astronomical references which are to some extent oblique, there is clear cut mention of the sea. The 6th Mantra of the 85th Sukta of the 5th Mandal says :

इमाम् नु कवितमस्य मायां महीं देवस्य नकिरा दघर्ष ।

एकं यदुद्गा न पूणन्त्येतीरासिञ्चन्तीरवनय : समुद्रम् ॥

This is a great Maya of the all-wise Varuṇa that so many rivers flowing fast can not fill the ocean with water. The 5th Mantra of the 136th Sukta of the 10th Mandal clearly speaks of the two seas, that which is on the East and that which is on the other side namely on the West.

उभौ समुद्रावा क्षेति, यश्च पूर्वं उतापर : ।

According to Geological experts it was not less than 15000 years ago that there were seas to the east and the west of that part of India where the Aryans lived. The Veda also speaks of ships plied by a hundred oars. All this goes to show that the people from whom the Rig Veda has come down to us lived in the Sapta Sindhu

region of India at a period much earlier than 1500 B. C. which western scholars are not prepared to go beyond. The span thus allowed for the development of our history and cultural life is much wider than the narrow limits within which western scholarship is determined to confine it.

We feel flattered on hearing a few patronising words about Indian culture from foreigners. There is nothing wrong in people from other countries enjoying our culture and Indians admiring the cultures of other countries, if such admiration on either side is animated by real appreciation and understanding. What is wrong in our case, is that we are often carried away by words coming from outsiders and allow them to become our mentors. We do not trust our own records or the evidence of our own scholars but accept blindly what others have to say about ourselves and our ancestors. A book named PREHISTORY AND THE BEGINNING OF CIVILISATION has recently been published under the auspices of UNESCO. Anything bearing the imprimatur of this august international body will naturally carry great weight and we may take it that it contains the latest information on all the topics with which it deals. The book asserts that it is not worthwhile taking the Rig Veda into

serious consideration because in the first place it does not go earlier than 1200 B. C. and, even if it did it does not give evidence of any worthwhile material regarding civilisation and culture. On page 389, it is said that "The Rig Veda is the epic of the destruction of one of the great cultures of the ancient world". On page 458 a sweeping statement is made that "Aryan conquerors were a simple, not to say a barbarous, people". In another place it is said that "Aryans knew how to destroy but not to build." This we presume is the high water-mark which Western scholarship has reached in its researches in Indology. The Rig Veda is nothing but a saga of the victory of the conquering Aryan barbarians over the highly civilised people who lived in Mohinjodaro and Harappa. There is nothing else of value in the book. Several decades ago, Western scholars had come to the conclusion that the Rig Veda is a collection of songs popular among the nomadic shepherds who constituted the main bulk of the Aryan population and all the research carried out so far has not been able to evolve any better picture of these barbarian ancestors of ours.

Let me sound a word of caution. In studies of this kind, we do not seek, because we can not find, ultimate beginnings. Whether at some

distant date the Aryans crossed over into India from some other country is no concern of ours. What we know for certain is that at the time when we first come across them in the pages of the Rig Veda, the Aryans were firmly established in India and had no memories of having come from anywhere else. They were good Indians and nothing else. Similarly, it is immaterial for our purposes whether the first Aryan who emerged at some distant date out of some anthropomorphic tribes of apes was a savage who started on the road to civilisation by painful steps. What is material for our future is that this Aryan as we meet him in the Rig Veda was not a barbarian.

### **Naturalistic Interpretation :**

About the religious beliefs of these barbarians, the mind of European scholars is perfectly clear and the result at which they have arrived are dutifully impressed upon the minds of young Indian children with the first lesson that they take in Indian History. They are taught that their ancestors worshipped natural phenomena and forces of nature like light, fire, water, the sun, thunder, and rain. Sometime later, as they became a little more civilised, these natural objects became personalised and began to be worshipped as the gods, Agni, Varuna, Surya, Indra etc. The

darker aspects of Nature became Asuras. This is a beautiful way of driving away from the impressionable minds of young children all sense of pride about their spiritual ancestry. Of course, the religious teachers of the country, past and present, do not uphold this view, but naturally their opinions do not carry any weight against the opinion of Western scholars. Officially Government, past and present, have lent their support to this modern theory without caring to consider the purely Indian point of view.

At the same time it would be unfair to lay the blame wholly on the shoulders of foreign scholars. In the first place, it is always a difficult task to assess correctly a culture from which one is separated both in space and time by distances running into four figures. I am sure with the best intentions in the world we would be equally liable to commit mistakes, if we have to assess the culture of an ancient people living in some distant corner of the world a few centuries in the past. And then some great Indian scholars of the past have also to some extent unwittingly, of course, helped in the formation of such an unfavourable opinion.

No one who cares to study the Vedas can do so without constant reference to the Nirukta of Yāska and the commentary of Sāyana. These books are invaluable but they have their faults. Yāska insists on deriving the meaning of every word from a root. This is perfectly proper but I must submit that it is not sufficient. If you have to elucidate the meaning of a passage you have often to travel beyond the purely etymological sense of the words occurring in that passage. Words, as we know, have their associate meanings, developed by centuries of usage but these associate meanings can hardly be found by revetting attention on the grammatical derivation of words. The manner in which Yāska has dealt with many words occurring in Vedic Mantras reduces them to description of a natural phenomena and seems to lend support to the Western view that the Vedic gods are nothing other than personified forms of natural forces. Again excellent as Sāyana's commentary is, it is written with a definite purpose. He lived in an age when many Vedic practices had gone out of usage particularly because of the influence of Buddhism. Sāyana and his patron Bukka, the founder of the great Vijayanagar Empire, had before them the great task and ambition of



reinstalling the Vedas as it were and reinstituting the performance of the Vedic Yajñas. It is in this context that Sāyana writes his commentary. He fixes upon the meaning which is suitable for his purpose. Veda Mantras are to be recited on certain occasions. These occasions are mostly Kāmya Karmas, that is, they are performed with a definite object in view. The object is some benefit to be obtained by gaining the favour of the gods by due performance of the ceremonies. As Sāyana interprets the Mantras, they become mostly prayers for long life, progeny, wealth and victory in war. Europeans did not share Yāska and Sāyana's reverence for the Veda but it suited their convenience to adopt the method of interpretation adopted by these two great authorities. In this way, they obtained verification of their theory that the Aryans worshipped the powers of nature and that they were simple folk, shepherds or nomads in the barbarian state of culture who had no sophisticated demands to make on their gods. They merely wanted the good things of life enjoyable by them in their then cultural condition.

**Some passages apparently not amenable to rational interpretation.**

True, there are certain inconvenient passages in the Rig Veda which contain state-

ments or discussions of a deeply philosophical nature. Obviously such passages do not agree with the general nature of what the Rig Veda is supposed to be. Shepherds do not talk philosophy and their songs seldom take flights of fancy beyond their flocks and herds and their loves and wars. Their relations with their gods are simple and straight forward. They offer sacrifices to the gods and expect them to satisfy their needs. This does not deter the Western scholar at all. He boldly calls such passages later interpolations which the clever Brahmanas have put in here and there in the Vedic texts. Once the purely philosophical texts are thrown out as spurious and later additions, the scholar's characterisation of the Veda stands fully justified.

This rejection of certain texts because they do not seem to fall in line with certain preconceived notions is part of the technique employed by Western scholars when dealing with the Indian scriptures. There are, for instance, the Upanishads containing matter of a highly philosophical nature. Naturally, this seems incompatible with the sacerdotal nature of the Saṁhitas that is the collections of hymns. The Western scholar removes this difficulty from the path at one jump. He says that the



Upaniṣads represent an intellectual revolt against the sacrifice-bound religion which we come across in the rest of the Vedas. In his own country, he has seen the emergence of an intellectual class after the scholasticism that prevailed for centuries and quite naturally he sees in the Upaniṣads the results of the emergence of a similar class in India. He simply ignores the fact that the Upaniṣads and the Sāmhitas both share the common name of Veda. He also dismisses with contempt the fact that in a hundred places the Upaniṣads take for granted a thorough acquaintance with, and acceptance of, the techniques of Vedic sacrifice. To him it signifies nothing that even such an Acharya as Sāṅkarācārya takes care to point out the great relevancy of the performance of the Vedic ceremonies as a preparation for that kind of knowledge to which the Upaniṣads lead. Such childish and facile explanations do not help. The corpus of the Vedas is one. It is an integrated whole, and if we want to do justice to ourselves and our subject of study we must reluctantly perhaps, but none-the-less firmly, refuse to be guided any further by these good friends from outside.

At the best, they leave us in a state of hopeless uncertainty, being themselves subject

to honest doubt. They do not know what to make of a number of passages which, for all one knows, may hold within themselves important principles of Vedic interpretation. If they do not characterise such passages as sheer non-sense, one can only ascribe this to their innate gentlemanliness. What, for instance, could anyone really make out of passages like the following from the VRĀTYAKĀṆḌA of the Atharva Veda.

व्रात्य आसीदीयमान एव स प्रजापति समैरयत् ।१।

Verily the Vratya was in a state of motion. He motivated (gave an impulse to) Prajāpati (D)

स प्रजापतिः सुवर्णमात्मन्न पश्यत् तत् प्राजनयत् ।२।

The Prajapati saw gold in Himself and gave birth to it. F

तदेकमभवत् तल्ललाममभवत् तन्महदभवत् तज्ज्येष्ठमभवत्  
तद्ब्रह्मभवत् तत्तपोऽभवत् तत् सत्यमभवत् तेन प्राजायत ।३।

It became One, it became beautiful, it became great, it became the elder, it became Brahma ( or Brahmā ), it became Tapas, it became Satya, through it this became created

नीलमस्योदरम् लोहितं पृष्ठम् ।७।

His belly ( the front part of the body )  
is blue, his back red. ( vii )

नीलैर्नवाप्रियं भ्रातृव्यं प्रोर्णोति लोहितेन द्विषन्तं विध्यतीति  
ब्रम्हवादिनो वदन्ति ।८।

Brahmavadis say that he envelopes the  
unpleasing rival with the blue and pierces  
the enemy with the red. ( viii )

I have given above the first three and  
the 7th and 8th Mantras of the First Anuvāka  
of fifteenth Kāṇḍa. Western scholars have quite  
frankly confessed that they can derive no  
sense out of such passages.

But the fact of the matter really is that  
our own scholars are at times quite as un-  
helpful. As regards the Vratyakāṇḍa referred  
to above Sāyaṇa leaves the whole chapter  
severely alone. He does not care to explain  
a single passage.

### **Absolute reliance on Sāyaṇa harmful :**

In his book on the Veda Sri. Aurobindo says  
that he was fortunate when he began his Vedic  
studies that he had not come across Sāyaṇa's

commentary. I would not go so far as this but I shall certainly say that if one is to take this commentary as the last word on the subject one would remain completely in the dark about some of the most important parts of the Veda. The result of not doing one's own thinking would in many cases be not only want of knowledge but utterly wrong knowledge.

Relying on the principle of धातूनाम् अनेकार्थत्वम् —Roots have many meanings—Sāyana gives himself almost complete liberty, I should rather say licence—in the choice of meanings which he selects. The result is that many roots have many meanings assigned to them in different places leading to no little confusion and then as I have pointed earlier the meaning of a word can not be derived always from its etymology. Sometimes, in fact, the effort to find some radical derivation can lead to almost ludicrous results. For instance, to derive सिंह from हिंस seems laughable when we see that there are so many other creatures which have similar natures to derive. कश्यप from पश्यत seems equally farfetched and almost a violence upon language.

**Swami Dayananda Saraswati :**

It would be a serious omission on my part if I were not to refer at this stage to the work of

Swami Dayananda Saraswati, the founder of the Arya Samaj. His works and teachings have given the greatest fillip to Vedic studies during the last century. He attaches great importance to Yāska although he is not prepared to attach any importance to Sayana. He and Sayana agree in attributing an antiquity, an authority and infallibility to the Vedas which is staggering to the Western mind. But here they part company. Swami Dayananda was a strict monotheist. He did not believe in the existence of separate gods and goddesses. According to his interpretation, Indra, Agni, Yama, Varuna etc. are not distinct individuals but simply names of the one God about whom the Veda says :

एकं सद् विप्रा बहुधा वदन्ति

The true substance is one, the wise call it by many names. This God comes in the various forms of Creator, Preserver, Destroyer, Teacher of virtue, Granter of boons etc. and the various names of the so-called gods are really His grammatically constructed names according to his various functions. Swamiji also did not believe in the existence of a Heaven or a Hell. Naturally, as a result of all these various differences there are differences in the interpretations of a number of passages between him and Sayana. But apart from such obvious and inevi-

table differences, the general trend is still very much the same. The ethical tone is perhaps a little higher but there is the same looking up to God, though not to the gods, for the good things of life.

### **S'ri. Aurobindo School :**

Attention must be drawn to one more school of thought which has recently appeared in this field. It is the school of Sri Aurobindo. It may be called the Psychological School. I shall have occasion to refer to this school at a later stage but for the present the following summation by Sri. A. B. Purani in his book **Studies in Vedic Interpretation** (on the lines of Sri Aurobindo) roughly explains the ideas underlying this school.

The objections against the acceptance of modern theories are :

- 1 All modern theories and interpretations are against the accepted tradition of India which regards the Veda as the fountainhead of all its subsequent culture.

- 2 It is not correct, as is generally assumed, to accept that the Upaniṣads came into existence as a revolt against the ritualistic formalism of the Veda.

In that case the gulf between the Vedic and the Upaniṣadic outlook would leave a gap which can not at all be accounted for.



3) European parallel helps us to assume that a mystic school similar to the Pythagorean and Elusinian might have flourished in India too.

4) Even in the Upaniṣads and the Purāṇas the gods are psychological and not material in their functions e. g. in the Iśa the functions of Surya- the Sun, and Agni- the Fire- have become psychological. This can not be explained unless we accept the same functions also in the Veda.

x

x

x

The gist of modern interpretation is that (1) the Veda is a book of poems praising the personified powers of Nature; there is an astronomical and allegorical element in it, and that (2) the philosophical element of thought in the Veda was taken by the Aryan invaders from the Dravidians who are freely hated in the Veda.

Sri Aurobindo's interpretation can be called: "Psychological". This psychological interpretation would assert that :

1) This gap between the Vedic and the philosophical culture is of our own making. (2) In ancient times there were mysteries in almost all civilisations Greek, Egyptian, etc.: a similar school of mysticism is possible in India. (3) The

acceptance of the modern view point would leave large portions of the Upaniṣads (which are Vedic) unexplained. (4) The origin of the Purāṇas would be even more difficult to account for on the basis of modern theories. (5) The Veda couches the secret doctrine of the Vedic mysteries. Thus, there are two meanings to every Rik— open and secret. (6) The incoherence of the Vedic text would disappear if this interpretation is accepted.

I have tried to give you an idea of the complexity of the problem. You will see that there is considerable necessity for clarification of a number of points. There is the question of the antiquity of the Vedas, particularly the Rig Veda. Of no less importance is the question of the region in which the Aryans lived at the time when we first meet them in the verses of the Rig Veda. An equally important question obviously is the kind of people the Aryans were, the stage of culture and civilisation which they had reached as revealed in this oldest record which we have about them. And the most important question for us is what the Veda has to say about itself as the scripture wielding undisputed spiritual authority over the vast majority of the population of this country. It is not possible to have two opinions about the supreme



importance of the last point. Whatever the Rig Veda might have to say about other people also claiming to be Aryans, it certainly has much to say primarily about our own ancestors in whom we are naturally very much interested. The whole of our cultural life has developed out of elements whose sources are to be found in the Rig Veda. Our tradition, our customs, our ethical standards, our literary heritage, everything in fact which makes us what we are today has its origin in the Veda. It is true, of course, that Indian culture has not been stagnant all this time. A number of streams have joined it from time to time. S'aka and Hūṇa, (Seythian and Hun), Pathan and Moghal. Arab and European, have all made their contributions. These contributions have been invaluable and have added their quotas to create the rich, living, vibrant thing that Indian culture is today but the main stream is that which finds expression in the Sūktas of the Rg Veda and in the Mantras of the other Vedas also. This current is the Bhāgīrathī of our cultural life. The other currents are like the Yamuna, the Brahmaputra and other tributaries which have merged their identity and combined with the main current to form the Ganga which we see today. You can not understand and know the Ganga without understanding and knowing the Bhagirathi. Similarly, no understanding of Indian culture is possible without a

full understanding of the Vedas, particularly of the R̥g Veda. And it must be clearly understood that any attempt to comprehend Vedic culture would be futile without first trying to comprehend the spiritual content of this great book.

### **My personal wanderings in this field :**

I intend to take you a short distance with me in my adventures in the field of Vedic interpretation. Like other young men of my generation who had some pretensions to a knowledge of English and some interest in religion, I dutifully went through the English translations of Vedic literature, particularly through the medium of The Sacred Books of the East series. This appeared to be the only correct thing to do because I had no knowledge of Sanskrit and there was no reason to doubt the correctness of the translations. But doubts did begin to assail my mind. If the Vedas said what the translations attributed to them, they were unsatisfying. Much later, I acquired a smattering of Sanskrit. As a matter of fact, my knowledge of the language still stands practically where it did about half a century ago but such as it was, it did open a great, wide door way for me. I could come in contact with the original texts. And then I took up Sāyana. I plodded through his pages as fast

as I could. There were a number of places where I could not understand him. I took the help of such Hindi translations as were available, particularly the simple Hindi version of the R̥g Veda by Pandit Ram Govinda Tewari. I went through Sāyaṇa again and again. Difficulties due to language still remained. But the general drift, the sense gradually became clearer. But with greater clarification of this kind my doubts increased in intensity and volume; the void in my mind became deeper and deeper. Referring to the beautiful Suktas about Uṣas, the Dawn, Max Muller once exclaimed, "But is the Dawn everything?" A somewhat similar exclamation would perhaps give expression to my feelings as I proceeded with my studies. Accepting the current interpretations of Yāska, one finds beautiful poems dedicated to Uṣas and Saraswatī, and ringing descriptions of phenomena like the Sun piercing the dark clouds, the welcome rain, so long imprisoned by the clouds falling on the thirsty earth, rivers rushing along to the sea. There are also verses depicting the emotions of a war-like race singing its poems of joy over a vanquished enemy. All this is no doubt very interesting but it is not impossible to find equally elegant poetry covering such subjects in more recent literature in India and elsewhere. There are astronomical and geological references which can gladden the heart of

the geologist and the historian. The research scholar can no doubt make very useful probes of a hundred kinds and fill volumes with the results of his inquiries. It may even be that, as some authorities claim, it is possible to find mathematical formulae, medical prescriptions and valuable hints on Engineering, Chemistry, Physics, and other sciences interspersed among the Mantras. Granted that all this and much more of the same kind is there, but what has all this to do with making the Ṛg Veda or the other Vedas, the scripture, the final authority on religion and philosophy and spiritual practice, of a great people? The poetry of a by-gone age, composed in circumstances which do not exist today as well as incidental information about, and an advice on mundane matters, have no element of universality in themselves. They do not call out the eternal in man. They cannot but be interesting relics of a past that has gone for ever and the past, to which they point, seems certainly to have been of a more rudimentary pattern than the present. True, there is the great number of prayers that constitute the bulk of the Saṁhitās but there are equally good prayers, if not many distinctly better ones, in the religious literature that came into existence much later both in India and outside. And in any case, prayers, no matter how well worded, no matter how beautifully they convey the heart throbs of

the men who compose them, cannot qualify the books, in which they find a place, for being accounted among world scriptures. The scriptures of a people must be the embodiment of a message, must bear within themselves a glimpse, a vision of the Truth, the Reality, which is the substratum of all that exists, which pulsates through all things living and non-living. But what is the message of the Vedas? It seems practically to have none. The Monotheism discovered in the Vedas by Swami Dayananda Saraswati was also to my mind not a message of the kind which I instinctively sought, assuming that Monotheism is good. What next?

### **Why Mantras considered important by later generations.**

One could, of course, accept the statement of those Western friends who say that the Veda Mantras are the songs of the naive, sturdy Aryan common man living happily with his flocks and herds, happy in his life which did not engage in flights of fancy but remained firmly wedded to the solid earth. One may even understand that out of these old songs many of them would be preserved but what could later generations find in them to make them revered as national scriptures?



In expressing the highest regard for the Vedas, were the great religious leaders or founders of important schools of religion and philosophy merely paying lip service to ancient tradition or were they really impressed by the contents of the Veda, were they guided in their admiration by the wording of the original texts or by the commentaries? Seeing that they themselves did nothing to revive the practice of Vedic Yajñas which is all that the Vedas apparently speak about, what did they really admire? The Veda claims to have a message for all mankind. There is the famous Mantra.

इमां वाचं कल्याणीमावदानि जनेभ्यः

ब्रम्हराजन्याभ्यां वैश्याय च शुद्राय च स्वाय च अरणाय च ॥

which proclaims that the word of the Vedas which is for the good of all is to be taken to all men, Brāhmaṇa, Kṣatriya, Vaishya, Sūdra, to one's own people and to strangers. But what is that word?

### **Upaniṣads not an intellectual revolt against Saṁhitas**

The theory that the Upaniṣads represent a movement away from, and opposed to, the older Vedic line seems so unsatisfying to any list of Upaniṣads. The 15th Upaniṣad will invariably be found to top the list. But it is

the 40th chapter of the S'ukla Yajurveda. Against, as we know, the Brāhmaṇas which explain, the ritual ordained in the Mantras, that lay down, in many cases, the order in which various ceremonies are to be performed and give very often, what may be called the history connected with many of these ceremonies are in a way extensions of the Saṁhitas and yet one of the major Upaniṣads the Bṛhdāraṇyaka, is solidly embedded in one of the Brāhmaṇas, the Śatpatha. The Mantras and the Upaniṣads are so inextricably mixed up that it is a gratuitous assumption to believe that the Upaniṣads represent a movement of thought away from the main current.

### Riddles and dark hints

Again, there are curious passages here and there which look almost like riddles. Take for instance the third Mantra of the 58th Sukta of the 4th Mandal :

चत्वारि शृङ्गा त्रयो अस्य पादा, द्वे शीर्षे सप्तहस्तासो अस्य  
त्रिधा बद्धो वृषभो रोहोति, महा देवो मर्त्या आविवेश ॥

" Having four horns, three legs, two hands and seven hands, thrice bound, this bull is roaring. This great God has entered man". What curious creature is this? It is not very



difficult to find objects which are respectively 4, 3, 2, 7 in number but what do we mean by the hands of a bull as apart from its legs. What is the complete picture that is presented to the mind ? What does this picture, such as it is, symbolise ? This is only one example. There are many such. Let me refer you back to the four or five Mantras which I quoted earlier from the Atharvaveda. Does the whole make any sense ? I can only assure you that the Mantras which follow make the meaning if there is one, curiouser. How does this strange collection of nature poetry, war songs, prayers, riddles and meaningless sentences happen to become the sacred scripture of generations of people who have had the privilege of giving to the world some of its greatest thinkers ? How has it managed to retain this position for so long ?

If there is a key to the interpretation of the Veda, then Sāyaṇa and the other commentators evidently did not possess it. The Veda sometimes throws out hints which seem to indicate that its words bear a secret meaning. There is, for instance, the 39th Mantra of 163th Sukta of the first Mandal.

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ऋचो अक्षरे परमे व्योमन् यस्मिन् देवा अधि विश्वे निसेदुः ।

यस्तन्न वेद किमुचा करिष्यति य इत् तद् विदुस्त इमे समासते ॥

" The Rks ( the Mantras of the Rig Veda ) are in the indestructible ultimate high region where the gods sit above the universe. What shall he who does not know this do with the mere words of the Mantras ? Those who know this are happy. " This clearly distinguishes between the mere words of the Mantras and the apparent meanings of these words on the one hand and the real meaning which is available only to those who are able to reach the great Empyrian, the high region of the gods, on the other. Again, frequent references to Soma may lead anyone to assume that the old Aryans were greatly addicted to an intoxicating drink prepared from the leaves of the Soma plant. But there occurs this curious Mantra (10,85,3)

सोमं मन्यते पपिवान् यत् संपिषन्त्योषधिम् ।

सोमं यं ब्रह्माणो विदुर्न तस्य शनाति कश्चन ॥

" When they desire to drink Soma they press the plant but the Soma which is known to the Brahmanas is not drunk by the man of the world. "

Evidently Yāska himself was aware that the

interpretation which he was placing on words and passages occurring in the Veda was not the real one, because he has said that the real meaning of the Veda could not be understood by an un-ṛṣi, a man who is not himself a Ṛṣi.

I found myself face to face with a great difficulty. For me, the correct interpretation of the Veda was not merely a matter of academic interest. I was in the midst of a spiritual crisis. By bringing up and temperament I could not bring myself to believe that the Veda was a jumble of old world, prose and verse, with no message for the world of today, which a kind of intellectual conspiracy had raised to the position of revealed scripture. I can only hope and trust that many of those whom I have the privilege to address here will share my feelings.

Even in ancient times there were people who held the opinion that no importance was to be attached to the meaning of the Vedic Mantras. What mattered was correct pronunciation. If the Mantras were correctly pronounced on the correct occasions then they were sure to bring about certain desired results whose nature is indicated in the Vinīyoga or

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I found myself face to face with a great difficulty. For me, the correct interpretation of the Veda was not merely a matter of academic interest. I was in the midst of a spiritual crisis. By bringing up and temperament I could not bring myself to believe that the Veda was a jumble of old world, prose and verse, with no message for the world of today, which a kind of intellectual conspiracy had raised to the position of revealed scripture. I can only hope and trust that many of those whom I have the privilege to address here will share my feelings.

Even in ancient times there were people who held the opinion that no importance was to be attached to the meaning of the Vedic Mantras. What mattered was correct pronunciation. If the Mantras were correctly pronounced on the correct occasions then they were sure to bring about certain desired results whose nature is indicated in the Vinīyoga or



application indicated for each Mantra. It is the proper intonation of certain sounds arranged in a certain mystic order which gives rise to such vibrations in the atmosphere and the astral regions around us, whose cumulative effect makes itself felt in the form of material benefits like wealth or long life or relief from physical ailments or victory, rain for example. While not denying the efficacy of correct pronunciation, Yāska and others like him placed equally great emphasis on meaning. As Yāska says: the person who knows the Mantras by heart but does not know their meaning is a **bhārahara**, coolie who carries a head load without knowing its nature.

You can easily see that my difficulties were of a two-fold nature. In the first place, there has to be a meaning which is intended to be conveyed by Veda Mantras. The lost key has to be found. We are living in an age which quite rightly is not going to accept the importance of the Veda merely on the testimony of other people. The Upaniṣads have already to a large extent ousted the Saṁhitas as objects of study. Nobody becomes a Brahmajñānī by merely reading the Upaniṣads but philosophical treatises of this nature produce a kind of intellectual intoxication which very

often deceives people into imagining that they are thereby making a real spiritual progress. If the Vedas have no really important meaning to convey, no message for suffering humanity to follow, they will provide very sterile reading and they will soon be relegated to those shelves in libraries whose dust is hardly ever disturbed. Then, of course, there is the fact that we do not come across demonstration of the efficacy of Vedic Mantras correctly recited. If there are people who are competent to give such demonstrations we do not generally meet them.

In either case, it seemed more desirable and perhaps easier to make intensive search for the lost key. Probably, I hoped, intensive study and close thought would reveal the key. It is true, that to a large extent one would have to depend upon one's reason and discard the interpretations put forward by men like Yāska and Sāyaṇa whose writings have come to be regarded almost as sacred as the Vedic texts themselves. Any one who presumes to differ from Sāyaṇa is supposed almost to commit an act of sacrilege. But in this matter it seems preferable to rely on what Yāska has said:

ऋषिपूत्रास्तु मनुष्या देवानब्रुवन् ।

को न ऋषिर्भविष्यतीति तेभ्यः तर्कं । यच्छन् ॥

When the Ṛṣis left the earth, men approached the gods and asked them who shall now be our Ṛṣi ? The gods gave them reason as their Ṛṣi ?



## SECOND LECTURE

### **Yogic interpretation, important methodology:**

It has been my firm belief that the way to uncover the mystery lies through Yoga. The various stages to self-realisation, to atonement with the Absolute Reality, lies through Yoga. But the Yogi knows that the common man can not normally bear the glare of the naked truth. The reality has to be brought home to him therefore in a diluted form, gradually, in the kind of language called *Samādhi Bhāṣā*, symbolic speech. Often words having a dual meaning have to be used conveying a simple, more or less earthly, meaning to the multitude and a spiritual meaning of deep content to the initiated.

Sometimes great difficulties arise when in the same book or in more or less connected passages a particular word is used in two or three different senses. The commentator has to use the light of the reason to differentiate properly among such meanings and he is certainly liable to commit mistakes. As an example I might refer to the *Vrātya Sūkta* of the *Atharvaveda* to which a reference has already been made. It is a small *Sukta* con-

taining so many short Mantras but to my mind the word *Vrātya* is used therein at least three different senses. In the first place the word is used equally and unequivocally for God, ईश्वरः then there are passages in which ईश्वर is referred to, not in His purely impersonal aspect, but in His manifestation as Rudra and lastly there are passages in which the word can only stand for a Yogi, a human being who is adept in Yoga. I have tried in my commentary to bring out these different meanings but can not claim not to have made mistakes in this connection. Acting on the principle that the key to more or less abstruse passages in the Veda lies in Yoga, I tried certain passages in the *Puruṣa Sūkta* which occurs in the 10th Maṇḍala of the Ṛg Veda. This was my first attempt. This is the *Sūkta* in which occurs the famous Mantra whose last words are पद्भ्यां शुद्रोऽजायत. The Shudra was born from the feet of the *Puruṣa*. I published my commentary on the *Sūkta* in 1947. In 1954 followed a more ambitious attempt to which I have referred earlier namely a commentary on the *Vrātya Kāṇḍa* of the *Atharva Veda* which has so far not been attempted by any scholar, Indian or foreign. I do not claim for a moment that what I have said in my com-

mentary is the last word on the subject; but I do assert that if a meaning has been extracted at all, it is with the help of the principles of Yoga. In any case, work along this line was satisfying to myself. It gave me the assurance that this was the way and the only way for unravelling the mystery and to find the key which would help to explain what the Veda has to say.

But if Yoga is to help us in our search for the key, certain fundamental principles will automatically come to the fore. Even where the Yogi uses *samādhī Bhāṣā* or symbolic language, there is a methodology behind his technique. He would not be erratic in his ways. There is a certain tradition which Yogis have followed ever since that time when an attempt was made to give an expression to yogic experience. This enables one Yogi easily to follow what another has said. There should be an evidence of a continuity of a tradition if Veda has employed words to express inner experience. The choice of words can not be chaotic but must follow a certain design. Looking at the *Samhitas* from this point of view, it becomes apparent that there is actually a design which is repeated place after place and carried over into the *Upaniṣads* as well. The



manner in which the episodes about the setting free of the imprisoned cows, the destruction of the strong holds of Vala, the killing of Vṛtra and the other feats of power and strength of Indra are constantly repeated in various contexts seems to assume that those who read these passages will at once understand their inner significance. The epithets showered on Agni as प्रजापति, as होता, as व्रतपति and the holder of all things that are valuable ( रत्नघातमम् ) can not possibly refer to the ordinary fire, the frequency with which the word Ghr̥ta is used and the praises lavished on it indicate clearly that something other than the ghī that we use as an article of diet is being referred to. The Aśvins who help so many people out of their difficulties and are moreover supposed to be associated with the brief period of time which follows midnight and precedes the dawn cannot be merely semi-human twins, born of a mare. Who is the Varāha who salvages the earth from death? Can the praises lavished on Saraswati as the inspirer of all that is true and noble possibly be applied to a river? There certainly seems to be a pattern according to which images of particular gods and goddesses have been built up. This idea emerged as I pondered on the Mantras more and more and it became increasingly clear



as time went on. Ideas flashed across the mind but the pattern was not yet clear.

### **Vasudeva Sharan Agrawal and Symbolic language:**

Quite obviously I was not alone in this field. As an example I might refer to the late S'rī Vasudeva Sharan Agrawal's book "SPARKS FROM THE VEDIC FIRE". He says:

"The language of the R̥g Veda is not to be traced in the lexical mould of apparent words and meanings. It is essentially the language of symbol-phonemes, designed to explain the mystical working of the cosmos on the parallel planes of life ( Prāna ), Mind ( Manas ), and Matter ( Vāk ). These are known as the Three Brothers of Agni, or equivalent to the Seven Sons of Aditi, who is the Great Mother Goddess or Infinite Nature. The Seers speak mystically, for the Gods love the mystic परोक्षप्रिया इव हि देवा : । "

The symbolical approach is thus the 'open Sesame' to Vedic exegesis. It opens a new door and puts us in possession of an unprecedented richness of meanings. It was in fact the ancient traditional approach embodied in the Brāhmanas. This evidence is ambrosial

for a fresh attuning of the mind with the thoughts of the Ṛsis in the Mantras. It should therefore be welcome to Vedic scholars every where. The exploding meaning of the symbol in a mantra is as gladdening as divine encounter. The problem of Vedic interpretation is essentially the problem of decoding the meaning of symbols employed by the Ṛsis with deliberate choice. Symbolical meanings serve as vibrations emanating from the Bhūtas and leading to the Devas ( देवं ब्रह्मन्ति केतवः ṚVI 50.1 ). The Bhūtas or material objects may be simple and ordinary objects, but they are idealised and become transformed into radiant entities of the highest value, e.g. the Tree becomes the Tree of existence, the Forest as the highest Brahman unlimited in time and space. Even the household Jar is treated as the symbol of the cosmos and the human Body, full with all the possibilities of existence, and the familiar Pestle and Mortar signify the two Clashing Rocks or the Opposite principles of Prāṇa and Apāṇa. The Barking Hound is the symbol of Indra as Ākāśa which is the course of speech, or Vāk. The croaking Frog ( Maṇḍūkā ) is the sign of the individuated Prāṇa stirred to life by the drops of heavenly clouds or the Universal Life principles moistening the earth ( भूमिं पर्जन्या जित्मन्ति ṚVI. 164.51 ).

It should be remembered that the symbolical meanings descend like an avalanche. The Vedas cannot be treated as individual strands. One should be willing to reckon with a whole skein entangled in the extreme. The stout heart of the enquirer should expect not a few stray threads but the whole cloth woven by the subtlest minds. It seems that everything is related to everything else. The Divine scheme of creation is like this, an unending inter-linking without fixed priorities, where one cannot insist on logical sequences. It is a case of extremely elastic formulations. One should be prepared to love this approach to meanings as the milkman loves the milk of his cow. The Veda is कामदुधा वाक् the Milk-at-Will Cow and the Mind is her Calf.

As an example of some of the results at which S'rī Agrawal has arrived in studying Vedic symbolism I may mention that according to him the cow (गो) is par-excellence the symbol of living organism producing milk through the extraneous process of chemistry. Her body converts grass and water into milk but the cow does not yield milk unless she gives birth to the calf. Milk is thus the symbol of motherhood. Fire is put out by water, but kindled by butter. Fire and butter are thus

identical, both forms of energy. As a symbol of motherhood the cow is extensively mentioned in the R̥g Veda. She is identical with infinite nature namely Aditi.

Agni has been described as मर्त्येषु अग्निरमृतो निधायि the immortal principle amongst mortals. S'ri Vasudeva Sharan considers it the supreme deity in the R̥g Veda, the everlasting protector of the law amongst those who are prone to perish. It is the same principle which manifests itself as Agni or fire on the material plane, as Vidyut on the atmospheric or middle plane, as Sūrya on the celestial plane. These planes are really planes of sub-consciousness and correspond to matter, life and mind. Agni is also stated to be identical with Rudra. It is interesting to note the identity of the principle of life with the principle of destruction. Ghṛta is the primal seed of the cosmos, the principle which quickens its embryo, laid into it by the Self-Existent Creator. The flowing of the ceaseless streams of Ghṛta, pure and full of sweetness (Madhu or Soma) is the creative process of cosmic and individuated life.

### **S'ri. Aurobindo's scheme:**

I shall not linger here any more. Those of you who are interested in the subject may

like to see S'rī Agrawal's book " SPARKS FROM THE VEDIC FIRE ". It is a pity that his untimely death has robbed Indian scholarship of a great worker in this field. I shall come now to the scheme of interpretation initiated by S'r Aurobindo who also looks upon the language of the Veda as symbolic. He has, in my opinion, devoted closer and deeper thought to the subject. Following his methods we arrive at meanings more consonant with our conception of what the Ṛsis were. They were not poets endowed with rich imaginations and blessed with a tendency for philosophical speculation. Stretching some modern parallels beyond their legitimate limits, one might say that the Ṛsis were not so much like Wordsworth and Tennyson as Blake and St. John of the Cross. They had certain deep spiritual experiences of the kind which a Yogi is believed to have and then they had to convey it in language which expressed this real import only to the initiated few, while to the ordinary man it spoke in terms of things in which he was most interested—wealth and cattle, victory and health and long life. S'rī Aurobindo states that when he took up the study of Vedic texts he had fortunately not read Sāyana's commentary. This statement at any rate shows the correct attitude in approaching Vedic exegesis. Whether



one may or may not have read Sāyaṇa, it is best to use one's own judgement. The only condition that should be imposed on the judgement is that the interpretation at which one arrives should be consistent. It should not be necessary to change the meanings of words and phrases from Mantra to Mantra. One set of words and phrases should have one definite significance. One image should symbolise one particular idea through-out the text. It should not be necessary to change the meanings at frequent intervals as Sāyaṇa has to do. Consistency also demands that the new interpretation should not run counter to any ideas expressly stated in some other part of the Veda. Thus, I find, that Sri Aurobindo has been able to delve deeper than S'rī Agrawal. Aurobindo being himself a Sādhaka has in many cases himself glimpsed at least part of the truth of which in his opinion the R̥sis of old had clear vision. As he says, "some of the **Sūktas** are plain and almost modern in their semblance, others baffle us at first by their semblance of antique obscurity. But these differences of manner take nothing from the unity of spiritual experience, nor are they complicated by any variation of the fixed terms and the common formulæ. In the deep and mystic style of Dīrghatamas Aucathya as in the melo-

dious lucidity of Medhātithi Kāṇva, in the puissant and energetic hymns of Viśvāmitra as in Vasīṣṭha's even harmonies, we have the same firm foundation of knowledge and the same scrupulous adherence to the sacred conventions of the Initiates".

A little earlier I mentioned briefly S'ri Agrawal's interpretation of Agni. Agni is referred to by a number of descriptive titles in the ṛg Veda.

अग्निर्होता कविक्रतुः सत्यश्चित्रश्रवतमः ।

देवो देवेभिरागमत् ॥

यदङ्ग दाशुषे त्वमग्ने भद्रं करिष्यसि ।

तवेत्तत्सत्यमङ्गिरः ॥

उपत्वाग्ने दिवे दिवे दोषावस्तधिया वयम् ।

नमो मरन्त ए मसि ॥

राजन्तमध्वराणां गोपामृतस्य दीदिवम् ।

वर्धमानं स्वे दमे ॥

R̥V I. 1. 5-8

In these passages we have a series of terms plainly bearing or obviously capable of a psychological sense and giving their colour to the whole context. Sāyaṇa, however, insists on a purely ritualistic interpretation and naturally succeeds in doing so by torturing the passages in a few places. He feels himself under no obligation to be consistent. He is, therefore, quite at liberty to interpret words in different places in different senses.



I should not like to repeat at length the arguments used by s'rī Aurobindo in refuting what has been said by Sāyana. I hope those who are interested in the subject—and let me trust that every body here is—will read the original. The conclusion s'rī Aurobindo arrives at is this that Agni in the Veda always symbolises the Divine Will, not the Will of God or a god, imposed upon that of an ordinary mortal, but the human will as it shines out after it has experienced Truth-Consciousness by undergoing a rigid course of spiritual discipline. Such a Will then naturally becomes pure and Divine. It is some thing immortal among mortals. It is the Will for which several mantras in the Yajurveda, all ending in the words शिवसंकल्पमस्तु, devoutly pray. It will be seen that all the terms which are used for Agni in the Veda are amenable to this interpretation. This will, born of Truth Consciousness, cannot be different from knowledge, supreme and unlimited, and therefore, Agni is truly called जातवेदा, knower of all that is born, in other words, omniscient. Saraswati on the same system is not a river in Punjab but the inspiration that results from Sādhanā, discipline of the mind, leading it unceasingly along the path that leads to absolute Truth Consciousness. Indra is the sublimated Power of the mind, characterised

by bliss, absolute Ananda. This bliss is quite different from pleasure and pain. Watchful care has to be taken to see that the mind does not stray from that exalted state. The journey is long and the temptations are many. Therefore, every fresh effort yields a new experience. This is symbolised by the frequent potions of Soma which Indra needs to keep up his strength. We must not forget what Veda itself says about Soma.

सोमं मन्थते पपिवान् यत् सम्पिषन्त्योषधिम् ।

सोमं यं ब्रह्माणो विदुर्नतदश्नाति पार्थिव ॥

। १०, ८५, ३ ।

'In their desire to drink Soma, people press the herb known as Soma; but no one can taste of the Soma which is known to Brāhmanas'. This one sentence completely refutes the theory that Soma was an intoxicant prepared from some herb and was used for the same purpose for which other intoxicants are used. Quite obviously the Soma here referred to is not something material but a subjective experience reserved only for the select few. They are called Brāhmanas.

### True approach to Vedic exegesis:

It is not my intention to give at any length

the results of the researches carried out by different scholars working along different lines. Enough, I hope, has been shown to prove that Vedic exegesis offers a very romantic and adventurous field. What is needed is that one should not allow oneself to be strongly possessed by pre-conceptions which make free thinking impossible. A historian may look into the Veda for references to the history of those times. Another person, who is obsessed by the idea that the ancient Aryans knew all that is worth knowing in the Arts and Sciences, will find references in these books to all the latest discoveries and inventions. To a third person the book will contain glowing accounts of Aryan conquest all over the world. It has always to be kept in mind that the Mantras were uttered by human beings for human beings. It would, therefore, be surprising if they contained no references to historical events, arts and sciences and social customs. But it would be a great mistake and a travesty of facts to imagine that they are either text books of history or directories of Arts and Crafts. They are the scriptures of a great people and it is from this point of view that we should approach them. Whatever other meaning the words of the Veda, may possess, the spiritual meaning

which alone can qualify the book as a scripture, must not be lost sight of and while delving into this rich store-house for valuable gems, these and other facts must be borne in mind.

In studying the Vedas we are face to face with two traditions. The language of the Veda might be symbolical but the symbols must be clearly understood. Each set of words must symbolise some definite concept and have the same meaning all through. Each Vedic Ṛṣi was a bearer of the torch. He was carrying to future generations the light which he had received from those who had preceded him. There was a tradition of spiritual symbols to which he was the heir and it was his duty to keep it undisturbed. Therefore, the same sets of words must carry the same meanings, if they are to be understood correctly by those that follow, just as they were by those who went before. There was also a tradition of language, apart from the language of symbols. If ordinary words could be interpreted in different ways according to the interpreter's convenience, Grammar and the Dictionary would cease to have a meaning and the very purpose of writing books would be completely defeated. What would be handed down from father to son would

be merely chaos and anarchy.

What I have said earlier gives an indication of the lines along which Vedic studies have to be conducted. I hope it is not necessary for me to re-emphasise the reasons which make it imperative for such studies to be taken up. Apart from the fact that the Vedas constitute our highest scripture, with supreme authority in all matters that concern the life of the Hindu, they are the main springs of all our social customs and traditions. You are probably aware that all the sacraments which have a place in Hindu's life have their roots in the Vedas. The Mantras which are recited on the occasion of marriage in the humblest Hindu family find their place in the description of the marriage of Sūryā, the daughter of Sūrya to the Aśvins as described in the 10th Maṇḍala of the Rg Veda. So are the Mantras which can be heard even today at the ceremonies which follow a death in the family. Most of us fail to realise that these Mantras constitute a link between the present day and a period whose beginnings are lost in the mists of pre-history and unfortunately most people do not understand it. If they did, they would experience a sense of exaltation at being transported today to a time when these very Mantras were recited

and these very ceremonies were performed, even when the heroes of the Rāmāyaṇa and Mahābhārata had not even been born. And there are other reasons for which Vedas have the supreme interest for us. The earliest forms of every philosophical school that has ever arisen in India are to be found at least in their incipient forms in the Vedas. Simple sentences like

एकम् सद् विप्रा बहुधा वदन्ति

द्वा सुपर्णा सयुजा सखाया, समानं वृक्षं परिषस्वजाते ।

तमोरन्यः शिष्यपुत्रं स्वाद्वत्ति, अनश्नन् अन्यः अभिवाकशीति ।

carry within themselves the seeds of much that learned ones on Vadānta and Sāṃkhya have to teach us at a much later date. Not only philosophical schools but, if it so chooses, every religious sect can trace its origin back to some passage or other in the Vedas. There are important matters in which present day Hinduism seems to have moved very far away from those ancient times. The study of these changes would be interesting but it can not be carried on without first going back to the Vedas. We know, for instance, that Śiva and Viṣṇu occupy a very high place in the Hinduism of today Indra though still called Devarāja has been relegated to a very unimportant position. But



Indra was Devaraja even in Vedic times, and Rudra and Viṣṇu were definitely his subordinates. Two of Visnu's epithets were इन्द्रावरज and इन्द्रस्थयुज्यः सखा । namely he who was born after Indra— this term means the younger brother— and the friend who always acts according to the wishes of Indra. How has this tremendous change come to take place? This is a subject worthy of study by itself on which much light is likely to be thrown from a study of the Vedas. But, as I have previously stated, to my mind the main interest of the Vedas lies in the fact that they are the scriptures of the Hindu. They must carry some message at least to the Hindu if not to the whole world. What is that message? What do the Vedas teach? What do they positively teach? What are the characteristics by which they can be recognised as belonging to the class of world scriptures? Any one who is interested in this subject, and I hope every one here is, will have to go back to the Vedas for an answer.

Having tried to show why it is necessary to study the Vedas and why in taking up the subject one has to be prepared not to be satisfied with the labours of previous annotators and commentators, most valuable as this work undoubtedly was, I think it is incumbent upon me to indicate some of the steps which have to



be taken in this connection. The first step, I submit, is that the Vedas should be studied. It might appear that I am merely stating what is obvious but it often happens that what is obvious is apt to be overlooked and is at times attended with so many difficulties that there is a tendency to turn one's blind eye towards it. I mean to emphasise that Vedic studies and Vedic research must be carried on under the auspices of the Universities as well as in the Pāṭhaśālās and Vidyālayas run on traditional lines. There is a marked tendency for these two sets of institutions to consider themselves as two separate compartments which have no common point. This must go. Arrangements should be made for periodic consultations and interchanges of knowledge between the Vidyālayas and the Universities. The Government which ultimately finances both can see to it that such arrangements are made. The Vedas have to be studied as they themselves have indicated. There is the well-known injunction :

इतिहास-पुराणाभ्यां वेदार्थमुपबृंहयेत् ।  
बिभेत्त्यल्प-श्रुताद् वेदो मामयं प्रहरिष्यति ॥

'One should enlarge the meaning of Veda with the help of the Itihāsas and the Purāṇas. The Veda is afraid of the man of little knowledge

whose studies are confined only to a part of the subject. This man will bring me into disrepute.' The words Itihāsa and Purāṇa are mentioned by way of example. If any one is interested in Vedic studies, he must study not only the texts but Itihāsas, Purāṇas, the Āraṇyakas and the Upaniṣads. As a matter of fact, to think of carrying on Vedic research without taking into consideration allied fields like the Tantras for instance is to deceive oneself. Directly or indirectly, knowingly or unknowingly, Vedic tradition is widely spread out in all this literature and no one should deceive himself that Vedic studies are still going on. The field of study is getting narrower and narrower and the number of students taking up such studies is getting persistently smaller and smaller. I shall give you one or two examples. As you know, a few years ago, the Government of India appointed a Committee to study the conditions of Sanskrit studies under the Chairmanship of Dr. Chatterji of Calcutta. Among other things, the report states that there is a School of Brahmanas in Jaipur who follow the Rāṇāyāniya Sākha of the Sāma Veda. When I went there as the Governor four years ago, I found that the School is practically extinct. This has happened in the course of less than two decades. This state of affairs obtains practically every where

although some places have managed to retain the tradition of Vedic scholarship more or less to this day.

A veil of secrecy used to surround Vedic studies in the past. Every one was not entitled to hear Veda Mantras recited. It is needless to think in such terms today. The printing press has made every book available to every body. The lengths to which we used to go to keep the Vedas unsullied by unauthorised people often went to ridiculous extents. I shall give you an example of this. As you probably know the Atharva Veda is found in two recensions: the ṣhaunaka and the Paippalāda. It was believed that not a single copy of the Paippalāda edition is available any where in India. A German Scholar Dr. Buhler learnt that a copy does exist in the library of Jammu and Kashmir State. He wanted to see it but permission was withheld because he was a Mlencha and his touch would pollute the holy book. He approached the Vice-Roy and under political pressure his wish was granted. Sometime later, the Kashmir Darbar and its religious advisers, the Pandits, came to the conclusion that as the book had been touched by impure hands it had become impure and lost its sanctity. Therefore, it was sent to Dr. Roth in Germany. Naturally nothing

could have pleased this German friend better. The book was in Shāradā script. Every single page was photographed and the book was first published and printed in this form by Bloomfield and Garbe in 1901. Much later, the late Dr. Raghuvira made it available in the Nāgarī script. The whole story would be laughable, were it not so tragic.

It reminds one of a Bundelkhandi proverb :

धन्न कुचीतारो बिलैया लै गई पारो

What a wonderful arrangement this is. Your lock and key are intact but the cat has walked away with the parrot in the cage.

A very serious difficulty presents itself at this stage. How are we to get the students, who will be willing to undergo the extensive and intensive training, which I have indicated earlier? It is a well known fact that the number of students in Sanskrit Pāṭhaśālas and Vidyālayas is rapidly going down. This is mainly due to one fact that this course of studies has ceased to be 'arthkara' any longer. It does not pay dividends. Some of the greatest Sanskrit scholars are putting their wards through a course of Secondary School and University education. Partly our shameful treatment of Sanskrit is responsible for this. An M. A. with Sanskrit has

a higher market value than a person with the Ācārya or an equivalent degree to his credit. And this state of affairs persists, inspite of the fact that nearly two decades have gone since we attained Independence. In any case, the facts are there for all to see. Great efforts will have to be made to get students of the right calibre to take up Vedic studies and, what is no less important, to open up for them avenues of honourable employment after they have finished their studies. The Government, and here I most emphatically include the Central Government, must take this work in hand. It is no use wasting your time by drawing up schemes. If the will is there a way can certainly be found. Advanced Vedic studies must be a special object of care for the rulers of the land. But this is not a work for Governments alone. There are any number of wealthy men who are charitably inclined and spend lakhs of rupees on objects of piety like dharmasālās and temples. There is another manner in which a good deal of money is being spent these days by religiously inclined businessmen. I know I am going to tread on dangerous ground and have already gained some unpopularity by saying what I am going to say now but I feel that the truth must be spoken. I have spoken of another way in which money is being lavishly spent by religi-

ously inclined businessmen. One hears of Gītā Mandirs and Rāmāyana Mandirs being built here and there. This is all very good no doubt. I have nothing to say against either the Gītā or the Rāmāyana. Both are master-pieces in their own way and worthy of all respect but neither of these books can compare with the Vedas in importance. They are among the numerous leaves and flowers of that tree of religion whose roots are the eternal Vedas. If, God forbid, one of these books is destroyed, a hundred others will rise to take its place so long as the root is safe; but, if the root is allowed to dry up, no watering of the leaves and flowers will bring the tree to life again. After all the Gītā is a commentary on the first two Mantras of Tēh 40th chapter of the Śukla Yajurveda, which is one of the books that constitute the Vedas. As you know these Mantras are :

ईशावास्यमिदं सर्वं यत्किञ्च जगत्याम् जगत् ।  
 तेन ह्यवतेन भुञ्जीथाः मा गृधः कस्यस्विद्धनम् ॥  
 कुर्वन्नेवेह कर्माणि जिजीविषेच्छतं समाः ।  
 एवं त्वयि नान्यथेतोऽस्ति न कर्म लिप्यते नरे ॥

I appeal to this class to come forward to make endowments for a proper study of the Vedas. Stipends will have to be paid to students and arrangements will have to be made as I have pointed out earlier for their subsequent



employment. Unless this is properly looked to, all our good wishes will fail to resuscitate Vedic studies. Original thinking has to be encouraged, not snubbed at, as it is today. May I point out, in this connection that there is one very important work remaining to be done, that is the collection of manuscripts of the various recensions of the Vedas. There are differences in the available texts which themselves will tax the devoted energies of a number of scholars.

I do not forget or question the correctness of Yāska's statement that no non-ṛṣi can really fully understand the Mantras. This is true. It is equally true that rishis can not be manufactured in pāthas'ālās and colleges. Tapascaryā and Yoga are needed for this purpose; but I feel that what I have just now stated will help to create the external atmosphere which may make it possible for some potential ṛṣi of the future, to function properly.

I have referred to the main purpose of the Vedic studies. As a matter of fact, there is much that even a casual study will reveal to the student. An example occurs readily to my mind. There is a belief current widely that adepts in Yoga carry their Prāṇa along the Suṣumnā by the practice of Prāṇāyama. This belief is widely



held even by practisers of Yoga who have cared to pay insufficient attention to the theory of Yoga. The Suṣumnā is a spinal cord and of the thickness of man's little finger. It is not tubular and can not possibly carry anything along with it of the nature of breath or wind but the false belief goes on from age to age. In the Puruṣa Sūkta of the S'ukla Yajurveda it is definitely stated श्रोत्राद् वायुश्च, प्राणश्च. Prāna and Vāyu have a common origin but are two distinct objects, thus clearing the doubt once for all. Whatever Prāna and Vāyu may be, they are not identical.

I come now to what is probably the most difficult problem connected with this subject. Where can we find teachers fully qualified to take charge of the Vedic classes? A good deal of care will have to be taken in the selection of suitable men; men distinguished not only for their scholarship but devoted to Vedic studies, endowed with the missionary zeal to make the scheme a success. I have quoted earlier a statement to the effect that no one who is not a ṛṣi can fully understand the Vedas. There is no method for turning people into ṛṣis. I know that a number of Yoga schools have sprung up here and there but it is a far cry from joining such a school and becoming adept enough in Yoga to move on the plane of consciousness from which the old

ṛṣis spoke to us. It may be that someone will be inspired to take up the practice of Yoga in right earnest. If there is such a person, he will be able to probe deeper into the meaning than others. It is not merely to pander to caste pride when I say that this is a special duty of those who pride themselves on being Brāhmaṇas by birth. They are still the unchallenged religious leaders of the Hindu community and it is up to them, whether they get any encouragement from the Government or society or not, to place before the public what they consider the message of the Veda to be. The performance of their duty should be enough reward for them. And in this connection we might also remember what Yāska says :

ऋषिषूक्तामस्तु मनुष्या देवानब्रवन्  
को न ऋषिर्भविष्यतीति । तेभ्यः तर्कं ऋषिं प्रायच्छन् ।

When the Ṛṣis began to leave the earth, men approached the gods and asked them, "Who shall now be our Ṛṣi ?" The gods gave them reason as their Ṛṣi. I am sure if the Veda is studied in the light of reason, it will yield up much of its hidden treasure.

This, in brief, is an outline of the things to which consideration will have to be paid if Vedic studies are to be taken up seriously. We are

still fortunately in the position that the link with the past, though considerably weakened, is not yet broken. There are large sections of the population which have at least some reverence for the Veda as our scriptures and some study of the Veda is still being carried on even if in a half hearted manner. It is for us to breathe fresh life into this more or less moribund structure. We owe it to ourselves and to the world at large.

I do not think I have added anything to your knowledge of the subject. I did not start with the idea that I shall be doing so, but if I have succeeded in raising doubts in your minds about the present state of Vedic studies and created some enthusiasm for taking up the subject in right earnest, I shall be amply rewarded.

I can say this and with the fullest assurance. If the Vedas are studied as they should be, a new world of beauty and grandeur will be opened before the student's eyes and he will receive at least one of the keys to the great Mysteries. He will get at least a glimpse of those wonderful forces, which move and sustain this universe and learn more about himself than from a hundred tomes of religious and

philosophical literature. He will have risen above the plane of speculation and come face to face with at least some of the facets of that great Reality in which we all live and have our being.

### **The word Vāk as an example of key-words needing interpretation.**

Take one of the words which occur very frequently in the Vedas, the word Vāk. Ordinarily the word means speech. It does bear this sense in the Vedas also but not everywhere. According to Yaska it bears other meanings. It is something much higher and much subtler than the speech which we come across in ordinary conversation. Take for example, the Mantra which I quoted earlier चत्वारि वाक् etc. It refers to four stages of Vāk. The first and the lowest is Vaikharī, the speech uttered by men and all other beings who have the capacity to speak in some way or other but the Mantra says that there are three higher forms. The next above Vaikharī is Madhyamā. Whenever the intention to utter words forms in our minds the tongue automatically forms contacts with those parts of the cavity of the mouth from which the projected sounds will emerge. The tongue may not actually touch those parts but there is a sensation that it is touching or going to touch them. Such speech is of course

inaudible normally but the sense of hearing does take note of it. We can all hear our thoughts. Subtler still is the Paśyanti (पश्यन्ती). This is the stage when thought and speech practically coincide. At this stage speech is a set of subtle vibrations, it is the stage of the Logos which means both idea and word. It is this which is probably referred to by St. John in the first verse of the first chapter of his Gospel : " In the beginning, was the Word and the Word was with God and the word was God" . Lastly comes Parā the supreme and most subtle form of Vāk. It is that Ocean in which all those vibrations and waves rise, which are later translated into ordinary language and the speech of non-human beings as well. Again, this form of Vāk is what is referred to in another Mantra which I quoted to you ऋचो अक्षरे etc. The Mantras of the R̥g Veda exist in the highest Empyrean, that highest region in which reside the gods above the plane of this Universe. In the very next line the Veda itself says :

यस्तन्न वेद किमुच्चा करिष्यति

What shall it profit a man simply reciting the words of the Mantras, if he has no knowledge of this highest region ?

In brief, according to the Hindu scheme of evolution of the Universe, the first stage of



materialisation of the pure Brahman gradually assuming a grosser form was that of Paramatman, that is, the pure impersonal Brahman in conjunction with Māyā. In a sheet of water, the one moon appears as myriads of moons, each moon surrounded by water. The sense of separateness arises. What was one appears now as the many. Each single consciousness seems surrounded, defined and delimited by Something. This gives rise to the desire to know itself and to know what separates it from other similar bits of consciousness. The will to know makes it develop from within itself the senses and the mind

### परां चि खानि व्यतृणत् स्वयम्भूः

Svayambhū, the self-existent one, bored the senses from within outwards. The instruments for knowing that Something which is outside and reacting upon it, had now been developed; but that Something was still eluding its grasp. Obviously that Something was within itself but it was not aware of this. In the state of stress and strain in which it was, bursting as it were to know itself and its limitations, the first object of a material nature that was developed was दिक् space. Space is not really an object in the sense in which the word object is generally used. It is really the potentiality of motion in which all motions are latent and out of which

all motions take shape in time. Motion, vibration is thus, the characteristic, the main property of space and this prime form of motion, the sum total as it were of all possible motions and vibration is V k. It is also referred to particularly in the language of Yoga as the आदि शब्द.

Incidentally this makes it clear that most people today find it difficult to understand. In every book on Indian Philosophy it is stated that śabda is stated to be the गुण, the property of Akāśa. The ordinary Pandit has no reply to give, when anyone who knows even smattering of Science says that it can be experimentally demonstrated that sound waves do not travel in space. The educated Indian is the first to laugh at the folly of his ancestors who tried to link up space with sound. As a matter of fact, Science is not wrong, but when the ancients spoke of शब्द being a characteristic of Akāśa they were not thinking of ordinary sound which is produced by one material object striking against another. They were really referring to what is अनाहत, not produced by the clash of material object against each other. This शब्द is not produced by the efforts of man or beast. It is matrix of all motions and vibrations. It is the परावाक् and this form of शब्द is certainly a characteristic of space.



I wish it had been possible for me to say all this in simpler language. But I find myself unequal to the task. I refer to it because if anyone's studies lead him, in the first place, to an intellectual conception of what Vāk is, he might possibly be led, through proper spiritual exercises to attune his mind to those planes of consciousness in which it can be experienced. He will really be a man fully authorised and competent to expound the Veda. You will be interested to learn what Vāk says about itself in the 125th Sūkta of the 10th Mandala of the Ṛg Veda.

अहं रुद्रेभिर्वसुभिश्चराम्यहमादित्यैरुत विश्वदेवैः ।

अहं मित्रावरुणोभा बिभर्म्यहमिन्द्राग्नी अहमश्विनोभा ॥ १ ॥

यं कामये तं तमुग्रं कृणोमि तं ब्रह्माणं तमृषिं तं सुमेधाम् ॥ ५ ॥

मम योनिरप्स्वन्तः समुद्रे ॥

"I act through the Rudras, the Ādityas, the Vasus and all the gods. I support both Mitra and Varuṇa, Indra and Agni and the twin Aśvins.

Him whom I like, I make all powerful. I can make him a Brahmā, a ṛṣi or a man of supreme intellect.

My roots lie in the waters of the great Ocean." Quite naturally all the gods and, as a

matter of course, all men and other living things can act only because they can utilise some of the illimitable power of the Vāk. The great ocean obviously refers either to Brahman or to Paramātmā. I would prefer the latter interpretation because it is Paramātmā from whom all activity emerges.

I shall be more than satisfied if I have succeeded in raising in the minds of even some members of my audience the desire to take in hand the study of the Vedas. The task is arduous but the rewards are equally great. No less great is, I feel, the merit accruing from the performance of this great duty.

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the first thing I did was to go to the  
office and see what was going on.  
I found everything in a state of  
confusion. The first thing I did  
was to go to the office and see  
what was going on. I found  
everything in a state of confusion.

and I was very much surprised to  
find that the first thing I did  
was to go to the office and see  
what was going on. I found  
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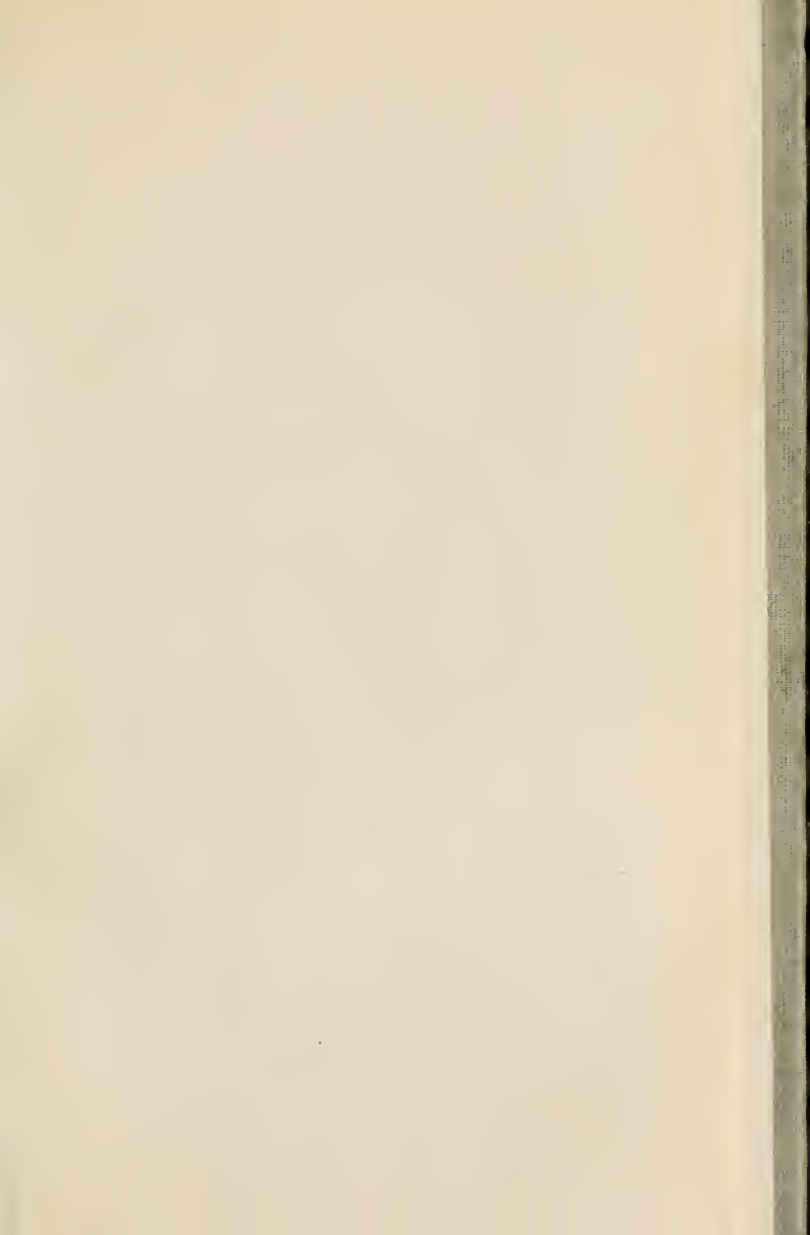




Dr. Sampurnanand, the author, was a versatile personality. He was well-versed in such widely divergent subjects as Mathematics and Astronomy, and Philosophy, Religion and Literature, and was, besides a veteran journalist. He commenced his career as a teacher in 1911, became a Professor of Mathematics and was taken up as Principal of Doonger College, Bikaner. At the call of Mahatmaji, he non-cooperated in 1920, and was imprisoned several times. He was a member of U. P. Legislature upto 1962, when he was appointed Governor of Rajasthan. He was Minister and also Chief Minister, in charge of Education, Finance etc. in U. P.. He was Chancellor of Kashi Vidya Peeth, a decade till his death on 10-1-1969.

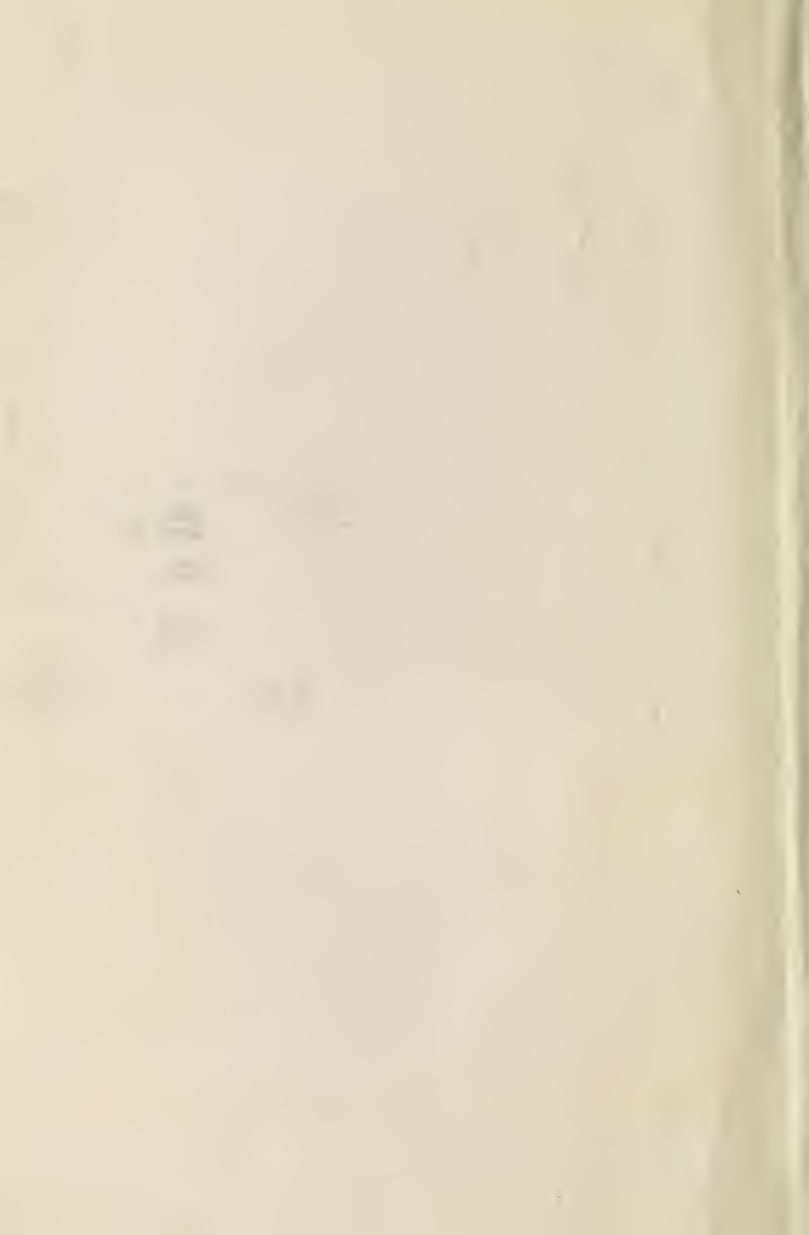
He was a devoted scholar of our ancient Philosophy, Religion, and Culture and he passionately pleaded for the right perspective in the study and interpretation of the Vedas. He has written several books on various subjects, both in English and Hindi.

It is interesting to note that all names in Dr. Sampurnananda's family end in "Anand" as the result of a Blessing from a great saint, which his great grand father—a Minister of the Independent King of Varanasi—received during the time of Warren Hastings.









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